1909MNRAS..69..249.

the Uganda Railway on behalf of the Foreign Office, returning to Trincomali about the middle of 1899. He obtained his majority in 1904, and retired from the service in 1906, having purchased an estate near Trincomali, intending to devote his leisure entirely to astronomical observation. His health, however, was injured by overwork, and on his return from a short visit to England he succumbed to a severe attack of dysentery, and passed away on Christmas day 1908.

From his early school days he took an intense interest in astronomy, the study of which he pursued, not merely as a pastime, but in a scientific spirit. He established an observatory at Trincomali, with instruments for observation and photography, including a 12½-inch reflecting telescope, specially built for him by Calver; but his failing health precluded the removal of the observatory to his estate after his retirement from the service.

As a keen-sighted and competent observer, and a skilful draughtsman, Major Molesworth was in the very forefront of amateur astronomers. His observational work was chiefly on the planets Mars and Jupiter, and certain special lunar formations, though he was also interested in other departments of astronomical observation. He communicated to the Royal Astronomical Society two full reports of his observations of Jupiter in 1903–4 and 1904–5, which were published in vols. lxv. and lxvi. of the *Monthly Notices.* His observations of Mars in 1903, accompanied by drawings, were partly published in the *Monthly Notices*, his complete manuscript report being placed in the Society's library. The value and importance of his work is also shown in sundry memoirs of the Mars, Jupiter, and Lunar Sections of the British Astronomical Association, and students of Jupiter will remember that he was the first to detect, in February 1901, the beginning of what has since become one of the most important and interesting features of the planet, the great disturbance on the S. tropical zone. He also obtained some valuable photographs of the great comet visible in more southern latitudes in 1901. But the amount of care and trouble expended on his work, his enthusiasm, and his exceptional ability as an observer can be fully appreciated only by those who have had the opportunity of seeing his original entries and drawings, for his published papers represent but a small part of all he really accomplished. During the last few years, though his interest remained as keen as ever, he was compelled to give up astronomical work owing to the pressure of other duties, but it was his intention to take it up again at the earliest opportunity.

He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society 1898 June 10.

James Rankin was born at Motherwell, N.B., in 1832, his parents being natives of the island of Jura, N.B., where the family had resided more than a century. Mr. Rankin was for over twenty years Assistant Examiner of Seamanship and Navigation under the Local Marine Board, London. While here, he was also engaged on investigations connected with tidal phenomena. He also devoted

Downloaded from http://mnras.oxfordjournals.org/ at North Dakota State University on June 25, 2015

© Royal Astronomical Society • Provided by the NASA Astrophysics Data System

1909MNRAS..69..249.

much time to Semitic languages and literature, mainly Hebrew and Chaldean, and was for some time a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. His death occurred on 1906 June 4, in London. Mr. Rankin's wife died in 1884; he leaves three daughters and one son, D. J. Rankin, F.R.G.S., M.R.A.S.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society 1879 January 10.

EDWARD HENRY RICHES was born at Leicester 1844 March 21. He was the son of Alfred Smith Riches, who was for many years Solicitor to the University of Cambridge. Mr. Riches was headmaster of a large preparatory school at Dulwich for many years. In 1878 he retired and lived at Scarborough, then at Bournemouth, and afterwards at Weymouth, where he died. He was the author of a number of schoolbooks, and his algebra had a large sale. He contributed articles on Astronomy to the *Leisure Hour*; he was a good speaker, and gave lectures gratuitously for charitable purposes. He married the daughter of Professor Labatt, of Berlin. His wife died in 1901; he leaves one daughter. He died of cancer, at Weymouth, 1907 August 21.

He was elected a Fellow of the Society 1870 April 8.

LAWRENCE PARSONS, FOURTH EARL OF ROSSE, was born at Birr Castle, Parsonstown, King's County, on the 17th November 1840. He was the eldest of the four sons of the third Earl, the maker of the celebrated six-foot reflecting telescope. He was only five years old when this mighty instrument was completed, and at once revealed the existence of spiral nebulæ. Lord Oxmantown (as he was during his father's lifetime) was educated at home, and his childhood and youth were therefore spent close to the observatory and workshops of his father, whose position as one of the leading men of science of his day brought him into contact with many distinguished men, whose acquaintance his son thus had the great privilege of making at an early age. Being brought up in close association with his father, it was natural that the son should become deeply imbued with the taste for mechanical engineering and laboratory work, which had enabled the third Earl to produce the great telescope without any help from the experience of previous makers of reflectors to guide him; and throughout his life Lord Rosse delighted in working in his own well-furnished workshop, and making various additions to the equipment of the observatory with his own hands. In due course he entered Trinity College, Dublin, and took his degree in 1864. Soon afterwards he began to take part in the observations with the 6-foot and 3-foot telescopes, and chose as the subject of his first scientific memoir the great nebula of Orion. This object had been very frequently examined at Birr Castle, and all the available material of drawings and descriptive notes (chiefly by Mr. Hunter, observer, 1860–64) was now worked up, verified, and used for the production of the well-known large and beautiful drawing published in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1868. Though photography has now put an end

Downloaded from http://mnras.oxfordjournals.org/ at North Dakota State University on June 25, 2015

© Royal Astronomical Society • Provided by the NASA Astrophysics Data System